

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 13396

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, US, JA, SREF

SUBJECT: DEFECTION OF SOVIET MIG-25 PILOT: LATE DEVELOPMENTS

REF: TOKYO 13370

1. DEFECTOR HAS ARRIVED TOKYO. EMBOFFS HAVE SEEN HIM, AND CONFIRMED THAT DEFECTOR STATUS GRANTED. BELENKO (THIS IS CORRECT SPELLING) APPEARS TO BE STABLE DISCIPLINED MILITARY OFFICER, ANXIOUS TO COOPERATE WITH AMERICANS. HE CONTINUES TO BE ADAMANT IN REFUSAL TO SEE SOVIETS. FULL REPORT OF INITIAL CONTACT WILL BE SENT IN ANOTHER CHANNEL.

2. GOJ HAS INFORMED EMBASSY OF INTENTION TO KEEP BELENKO IN JAPAN ONE DAY LONGER THAN CURRENTLY SCHEDULED, I.E. UNTIL EVENING OF THURSDAY SEP 9. DECISION STEMS FROM GOJ "POLITICAL - LEGAL" CONSIDERATIONS TOWARD DEFECTION WHICH HAVE DEVELOPED AND SOLIDIFIED AT HIGHEST LEVELS DURING LAST EIGHT HOURS. IN CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN CHARGE AND FONOFF AMERICAN AFFAIRS DIR- GEN YAMAZAKI AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS DIRGEN TACHIBANA, JAPANESE POSITION OUTLINED AS FOLLOWS: ACCORDING TO YAMAZAKI, THUS FAR THIS MATTER BEING HANDLED AS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE (I.E. ILLEGAL ENTRY WITH POSSESSION OF WEAPON). MATTER HAS BEEN IN HANDS OF PROCURATORS WHO HAVE CHARGE OVER CUSTODY OF PLANE. YAMAZAKI EXPLAINED, WITH A REFERENCE TO BUREAUCRATIC COMPLICATIONS, THAT PROCURATORS HAD TODAY (SEPTEMBER 7) DECLINED TO ALLOW JDA EXPERTS ANYTHING MORE THAN A CURSORY EXAMINATION

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OF PLANE. HE FURTHER EXPLAINED THAT SOVIETS TAKING POSITION

THAT AIRCRAFT IS INVIOABLE AS SOVIET GOVERNMENT PROPERTY. GOJ HAD NO INTENTION OF ACCEPTING THIS POSITION, YAMAZAKI SAID. HE IMPLIED, HOWEVER THAT LEGAL BASIS ON WHICH GOJ IS ATTEMPTING TO OVERRIDE SOVIET POSITION IS THAT THIS IS CRIMINAL MATTER, PLANE IS IN CUSTODY OF PROCURATORS, AND THEREFORE SUBJECT TO THEIR INVESTIGATION. HE FURTHER IMPLIED THAT THIS ARGUMENT DEFENSIBLE ONLY AS LONG AS BELENKO REMAINED IN COUNTRY.

3. TACHIBANA CONFIRMED THIS POSITION TO CHARGE. WHEN PRESSED WHETHER TECHNICAL SURVEY OF AIRCRAFT COULD GET UNDERWAY BEFORE BELENKO LEFT COUNTRY, TACHIBANA SAID THAT HE HAD SUCCEEDED IN OVERCOMING PROCURATOR'S OBJECTIONS AND ARRANGING FOR TECHNICAL SURVEY CONDUCTED BY JDA ASSISTED BY AMERICANS TO BEGIN, POSSIBLY BY TONIGHT (SEPTEMBER 7) AND CERTAINLY BY TOMORROW (SEPTEMBER 8). ASKED WHETHER TECHNICAL SURVEY COULD CONTINUE AFTER PILOT LEFT JAPAN, TACHIBANA REPLIED, "IT WILL NOT BE IMPOSSIBLE. ALTHOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES FOR CONTINUING SURVEY MIGHT BE LESS FAVORABLE AFTER DEFECTOR HAS LEFT, GOJ WILL STILL TRY TO SEE WHAT CAN BE DONE." HE ADDED HOWEVER THAT GOJ HOPES TECHNICAL EXAMINATION CAN BE LARGELY COMPLETED BEFORE PILOT LEAVES.

4. CHARGE FORCEFULLY POINTED OUT OBVIOUS FLAWS IN JAPANESE POSITION AND IMAGE PROBLEMS IT CREATED FOR JAPAN. MORE SPECIFICALLY, HE FELT STRONGLY THAT LINKAGE BETWEEN PRESENCE OF PILOT AND CONDUCT OF INVESTIGATION THREATENED BEST INTEREST OF BOTH COUNTRIES, WHICH REPRESENTED BY SPEEDIEST POSSIBLE DEPARTURE FOR U.S. OF DEFECTOR, AND OPPORTUNITY FOR FULL TECHNICAL EXAMINATION OF PLANE. CHARGE STATED TO TACHIBANA THAT IN EVENT IT NOT POSSIBLE TO COMPLETE FULL TECHNICAL EXAMINATION OF PLANE PRIOR TO BELENKO'S DEPARTURE HE HOPED GOJ WOULD BEAR IN MIND THE GREAT IMPORTANCE WHICH USG ATTACHED TO OBTAINING MAXIMUM POSSIBLE KNOWLEDGE OF THIS AIRCRAFT.

5. BOTH TACHIBANA AND YAMAZAKI ACKNOWLEDGED MUTUAL INTEREST IN EXPEDITING DEPARTURE OF BELENKO FOR U.S. AND UNDERTAKING EXAMINATION OF AIRCRAFT. BOTH INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT "COMPROMISE" WHICH HAD BEEN WORKED OUT--I.E. DELAY OF BELENKO'S DEPARTURE UNTIL EVENING SEPTEMBER 9 AND PROCEEDING

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WITH EXAMINATION OF PLANE BY JDA AND US EXPERTS PRIOR TO THAT TIME--WAS BEST POSSIBLE UNDER "LEGAL AND POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES".

6 COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THERE IS DISAGREEMENT AT WORKING LEVELS, WE THINK AT MOMENT THAT GOJ FIRMLY DUG INTO CURRENT POSITION. IN OUR JUDGMENT, DELAY OF ANOTHER DAY WILL NOT RISK ALTERING DEFECTOR'S DETERMINATION TO PROCEED TO UNITED STATES. ALTHOUGH GOJ POSITION AS EXPLAINED BY YAMAZAKI AND TACHIBANA DOES NOT

EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY OF CONTINUED TECHNICAL EXAMINATION OF
PLANE AFTER BELENKO HAS LEFT, POSITION THEY HAVE TAKEN IS NOT
VERY REASSURING ON THIS SCORE AND AT BEST WOULD ALLOW FOR
LIMITED EXAMINATION BEYOND THAT DATE. AS IT LOOKS NOW
WE WILL HAVE TO BRING STRONG PRESSURE TO BEAR ON GOJ TO
ENABLE US TO HAVE SUFFICIENT ACCESS TO THIS AIRCRAFT. WE
FEEL HOWEVER THAT SUCH PRESSURE SHOULD NOT BE BROUGHT TO
BEAR UNTIL BELENKO HAS LEFT JAPAN. BELENKO'S DEPARTURE IS ONLY
WAY WE CAN THINK OF TO BREAK LINKAGE JAPANESE HAVE CREATED.
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